The officer hovers over me. I launch a cloud of dirt up from the ground with my good hand. I bounce up and I tackle him. The loose bits of soil sting my eyes as he struggles to get me off of him. Even in the darkness the gun still glows silver. It's true what they say. Doing a heinous action once makes it easier to do again. Within seconds I've got a grip on the gun. The officer is trying to fight me off and for the most point he's winning.

My life depends on the gun. Cassie's life depends on the gun. I'm not letting go. The cloud subsides and I take a fist to my face. The cop pulls his hand away, knuckles stained with blood. I'm still not letting go. He pushes me off, and I pull the gun tossing both of us back to the ground. The only thing in my focus is the gun. I'm pushing, pulling, and bending his arm ways I previously thought weren't possible as he keeps flailing with his good hand.

Splashes of red dot the fight. My teeth are even beginning to feel loose. On top of the grunts and groans I hear the officer's walkie-talkie, giving random garbled information. In another desperate action I lift my knee and kick it off his side. This is his fight, and if he wants me captured he's going to have to do it alone.

I attempt to roll to gain some kind of leverage, but the guy is way too heavy. It isn't long before the gun discharges and a bullet plants itself in the ground. The resounded bang has clearly started a timer. If the birds scurrying in panic weren't enough of a clue that the entire field could have heard the shot the resounding replies of the officers let it be known.

Another punch makes contact with my skull. That's it. I release the gun from one of my hands and give him a right hook. It seemed to catch him by surprise. He's looking at me in a daze. I respond by giving him another. With this moment's reprieve I'm able to push him off of me. A kick to the stomach is all it takes to release his hold on the gun.

It drops into the dirt below. We both dive for it. I've got my hands on it first. I don't have time to think. I fire. A star-burst of blood and charred bits of bone scatter about as a geyser rushes from the man's knee. He screams in agony. I don't have time to concern. I turn tail in run, his pleading to the heavens above is almost enough to get me to cringe.

In my head I see all of the blood exploding and staining my hands. I did this. I can't say these thoughts are alien to me any more, but I am forced to wonder how far I'm willing to go. If the bullet pierced his head would I be feeling any more regret, or would I just be running like I am now? As the screams of pain lessen I am able to purge any semblance of guilt out of my mind.

The barn's getting closer. It isn't the best place to hide, but as I can see the wide open fields around me I realize that it's probably the only I can hide. I turn around to see the remaining officers helping their fallen comrade. They're not even looking at me. I look at the gun and wonder what the fuck my mind is doing.

I chuck the gun into the infinite fields. It catches a sunbeam as it falls into nothingness. The barn comes closer into range the further the clock moves. The shouting returns to full-force. The police are once again after me. This time a bloodlust has neighbored their hunger for a perverse sense of justice. An explosion of dirt, pebbles, and other scattered debris nips at my heels. The resounding bang causes my heart to crumble. They're not interested in taking prisoners anymore.

The barn door is just out of my grasp when there's another shot. This time shards of splintered wood strike my side. Another miss. I take this brief moment of relief to escape to the shelter of the barn. The door slams behind me as I hear another cock and blast. I scan the room for some place to hide, but nothing crosses my eyes. The door is kicked open and seconds later I've got a cold barrel pressed against my neck. I raise my hands.

"Give me one goddamn reason I shouldn't shoot right now."

My eyes widen.

"A criminal would be brought to justice, I could just claim self defense, the world would have one less of you goddamn fuckers, and I'd even be doing you the favor of sparing you the pain of being shanked in prison."

Sweat loosens the barrel of the gun. Double vision blurs the barrels and other barnyard debris. My mind swirls with lie after lie. My tongue has already been tainted silver and my hands have been tainted red. There's no longer any reason on this barren earth to play softly any longer. Morbid visions cross my mind that still manage to shock myself as I speak.

"You won't be able to find where I hid her, unless you expect my corpse to tell you."

"Bastard!" he says.

He blunts the back of my head. A deafening ring knocks me to the ground as a tapestry of bloody specks coat the air and the hay down below. I fall to my knees, staring to the realms above. Pain. That's the only thing that exists. That's the only thing that will ever exist, until noise pierces the ether.

"What the fuck are you doing?" I hear a difference voice over the rounding ringing in my ears.

Out of the corner of my eye I see that the other standing officer has returned, the crippled one slung over his shoulder. They eye the back of the gun, and they eye the blood spurting forth from my mouth. The crippled officer has a light in his eyes as if he's seeing some sort of karmic justice.

"He said that he hid her..."

"I know, I heard. I heard every single word of your little conversation. The captain is sure to know about this. Now take Rogers back to the cruiser and I'll finish up here."

I dared to turn my head, thanking whatever entity allowed me to get thus far, that it wasn't filled with explosive metal. The officer holding said gun still had it pointed at me, his finger vibrating. That other officer's piercing stare seemed to be the only thing holding the trigger still. My hero withdrew his gun, took aim at me, and beckoned the other two officers to go. It wasn't long before we were alone.

"Thank you," I managed to say through blood-stained clenched teeth.

"What?" he asked, taken aback.

"If it weren't for you then my corpse would be painting the barn... more than it is already," I said, trying my damnedest to find some humor in the situation."

"It might still be if you don't tell me where you hid Cassie."

"I didn't hide Cassie. She ran into the cornfield and is probably hiding out there somewhere. Even she's done with me."

A taste joins the copper-tone flavor of blood in my mouth. The taste of defeat, followed by the after-taste of despair. I'm done. I've failed. The world was done with me when I tried to help Cassie. Cassie was done with me when I tried to help her. And finally I was done with myself when I tried to help her. A tear sparked the corner of my eye. He talks into his walkie-talkie while never taking the gun off its course.

"I swear, if you're lying—"

"Do I look like someone who is in the position to lie!?"

I shout. I turn enough to sneer. Go ahead shoot me. Just go ahead. He doesn't. He takes a step back, keeping his aim focused on my head. We're now staring at each other eye-to-eye. Both of us thinking that we're doing something so right, so much justice. I've failed us both, haven't I? His wavering expression shows the mental gymnastics he's going through to try to pin what kind of evil mastermind I am.

"Will you come quietly then?" he asks, trying to keep up his domineering tone.

A thought so ludicrous crosses my mind that I need to use every ounce of my willpower to stop myself from bursting out with laughter.

"On one condition," I say with a smile.

He wavers his gun. It's either a signal to shut up or to continue. I take it as the latter.

"Cassie has... been hurt," I say, choosing my words carefully. "By me, by people she cares about, and who knows who else. She needs help, a lot of help. I obviously was unable to give it to her."

"What kind of help are you talking about? What did you do to her!?"

"I kidnapped her. Nothing more. Ask yourself why."

The officer says nothing.

"Tell me. What do you do with kidnapping victims?"

"We get them home safely, what else?"

"What if you can't do both?"